

PEOPLE

EDERA, THERESA

## ON THE JOB

# 11 years she's been building up to this

By ERIC STANGE

Theresa Edera knew at age 18 that she wanted to become an architect. Now, at age 28, she's close to her goal.

If she passes the national examinations offered this year she will become a registered architect — after nearly 11 straight years of work.

The long wait is not unusual for the field. "I figured I'd never make it until I was 80," she says with a smile.

The rigorous training required by architecture schools and by the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (which administers the tests) ensures that aspiring architects know what they're getting into.

"If you figure buildings have to stay up, it's a good idea," says Edera, a Duxbury native.

Although Edera is not yet registered, she performs many of the tasks of a registered architect, including acting as project manager for building rehabilitation jobs undertaken by her firm, Chia-Ming Sze, of Boston. The main thing she can't do is stamp drawings — signifying that

they have been approved by a registered architect as safe for construction.

"There's quite a bit of satisfaction to seeing something you've worked on go up," she says.

But while "there's some glamour in architecture, about 85 percent of it is drudgery," says Edera. Working out the hundreds of different specifications for materials, drawing floor plans and window details — what Edera calls the "non-imaginative part" of the job — begins almost at the start of a project and continues until the very end. The most fun, she says, "is coming up with a concept that'll work."

Edera felt drawn to architecture because she was interested in art, math and environments — the way people live. A math background is not essential, she says, although an interest in engineering and the way things are put together is crucial.

As a woman in a field dominated by men (before 1970 fewer than one percent of the registered architects in the U.S. were women, according to Edera) she



Staff Photo by Ted Garland

Architect Theresa Edera experiments with scale models in her studio.

says she has to fight a tendency to channel women into interior design.

"I'm interested in interiors," she says, "but I'm more interested in construction and building design."

Edera got her Bachelor's degree from the Boston Architectural Center School in a six-year work-study program. Most other architectural degrees are post-graduate — involving two or three years of

work after college.

"If you're going to invest that much time and training," she says, "you have to be really interested."

Because someone in her position may expect a salary of about \$16,000, Edera adds another point to consider: "It's not a profession where you necessarily make a lot of money."